

**Testimony before the
United States Senate
Finance Committee**

Child Care: Supporting Working Families

Presented by:

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Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Vicky Flamand. I am a 30 year old single mother of a beautiful two year old girl. I live in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. I am a hard worker and have always prided myself on my ability to be self-sufficient. I maintain a small two-bedroom apartment for my daughter and myself and I drive a ten-year-old car because I cannot afford a newer one. I work very hard to provide a safe and stable environment for myself and my child while struggling to work and go to college.

I strongly believe in the importance of consistency within my daughter's environment in order to provide her with a sense of security and love. To this end, I have struggled to keep my child with the same child care provider for the majority of her short life. The obstacles to fulfilling this goal include, but are not limited to, changing jobs in order to meet my provider's new hours.

Now I am confronted with a new obstacle for which there seems to be no way around. You see, as a single mother, I make only enough to pay my bills and live a very modest lifestyle. My annual income is \$13,500 per year, and that includes my Food Stamp benefit. As I said, I am a hard worker and I go to work every day. Until recently, I received Transitional Child Care assistance through Okaloosa-Walton Child Care Services, which helped pay my child care fees. However, my Transitional Child Care benefit ended on March 1st of this year. My income still places me well within Florida's eligibility level for child care assistance and I still qualify for help paying for my child care expenses.

However, due to a lack of funds in Florida this year, my daughter and I have been placed on a waiting list for child care help, along with 358 other families in Okaloosa and Walton counties, and over 46,800 other families in the state.

Now I am left with the dilemma of no help with my child care costs. I cannot afford to pay full child care fees so that I can work, as my weekly child care expenses total over 42% of my weekly take-home pay. I could, of course, quit working and return to welfare, but I choose to work hard so that I can teach my child the importance of self-sufficiency. I am not asking to be supported by the government, but isn't the concept of the Transitional Child Care program and others like it to promote self-sufficiency for working parents who are willing and able to work, but even with doing so remain below the poverty line? I have been told by many agencies that the only way I can obtain assistance with my child care expenses is to quit my job and apply for cash assistance. Please tell me what message our government is sending to parents like me when the only way I can support my self and my child is to quit my job.

I know that I am not the only parent with this dilemma. According to Okaloosa-Walton Child Care Services, there are dozens of other families in these counties alone who are in my very same situation, and more working parents are being turned away every day. As a productive citizen and taxpayer, I think it is my responsibility and right to be heard much more clearly. Please step forward for parents like me. Show us that we are not wrong for wanting to work and teach our children the importance of self-sufficiency. Help us by approving significant new funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant so that we don't have to choose between quality care for our children and our jobs.